

I would also like to congratulate each member of the team, which includes: Richard Baxter, Natalie Binder, Katharine Bracken, Cameron Kelsey, Sandra Newton, Jacque Owen, Jeremy Pitts, Benjamin Potmesil, Meagan Reese, Rachel Ryckman, Ryan Stewart and Steven Ujvary.●

RECOGNITION OF WHITE PASS & YUKON RAILROAD'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize an Alaskan institution as it nears its 100th birthday.

It is a major tourist attraction in Alaska, the eighth most popular in the state in 1998, boosting ridership in 1999 to about 274,000 passengers. It is an engineering marvel, having been named an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1994, such as the Panama Canal, Eiffel Tower, and the Statue of Liberty. It is an historic institution, its history tied directly to that of the Territory and State of Alaska. It got its start because of the famed Klondike Gold Rush of 1898—the last great Gold Rush in North American history. But it is more.

The White Pass & Yukon narrow-gauge Railroad is a lasting monument to the power of a dream, and to the ability of this country to mobilize technology. And it is proof positive that if you never give up, you can accomplish any worthwhile task, no matter how difficult the challenge. That lesson is as important today, as it was in 1900, at the line's completion.

It was early in 1898 when two men came north intent upon solving a transportation dilemma—intent upon moving men and supplies across the daunting Coast Mountains of Southeast Alaska, so they could reach the gold fields of the Yukon to forge national wealth for both Canada and America from the virgin wilderness. Sir Thomas Tancrede, a representative of a group of British financiers and Michael J. Heney, a Canadian railway contractor, by chance met one night at a hotel bar in Skagway, Alaska.

Tancrede, after detailed surveys, had concluded that it was impossible to build a railroad through the rugged St. Elias Mountains that separate the interior of the Yukon from Alaska at the northern end of the Alaska Panhandle. But Heney had just the opposite view. After an all-night "discussion," one of the world's great railroad projects was no longer a dream, but an accepted challenge.

On May 28, 1898, construction began on the White Pass & Yukon Route. Utilizing tons of black powder and thousands of workers the project began. Two months later the railroad's first engine pulled an excursion train from Skagway north over the first four miles of completed track, making the WP&YR, the northernmost railroad in the Western Hemisphere—the first built above 60 degrees north latitude.

From there on, the going got tough. The railroad, truly an international

undertaking, climbed from sea level at the docks in Skagway through sheer mountains to 2,865 feet at the summit of the White Pass. It faces grades as steep as 3.9 percent. Heney's workers hung suspended by ropes from the vertical granite cliffs, chipping away with picks and planting black powder to blast a right-of-way through the mountains. Heavy snow and temperatures as low as -60 °F hampered the work. And the mere whisper of a new gold find sent workers scurrying off in droves.

With all odds against it, the track reached the summit of White Pass on Feb. 20, 1899 and by July 6, construction reached the headwaters of the great Yukon River at Lake Bennett. While southern gangs blasted their way through the pass, a northern crew worked toward Whitehorse, later the capital of the Yukon Territory. On July 29, 1900, the 110-miles of rails met at Carcross, where a ceremonial spike was driven by Samuel H. Graves, the company's first president. It is that anniversary—the Golden Spike Centennial Celebration—that will take place in Carcross, Yukon Territory, on Saturday, July 29 that is a reason for this statement.

Another reason, however, is simply to honor the White Pass, one of the most historic and quaint railroads in the world. Through the years when Alaska was a territory and later a state, the railroad enjoyed a rich and colorful history. It hauled passengers and freight to the Yukon; was a chief supplier for the U.S. Army's Alaska Highway construction project during World War II; and later was a basic freight railroad, hauling metal from the mines of the Yukon to tidewater in Alaska. The company after WWII began modernizing itself, retiring the last of its steam engines in 1964, switching to diesel locomotives. It became a fully-integrated transportation system, carrying freight (containers and highway tractor-trailer units) and passengers from Alaska to Canada's Interior.

In 1982, however, world metal prices plummeted and the major mines in the Yukon shut down—metals being the most dependable freight during its first 82 years of service—causing the railroad's operations to be suspended. It was six long years later that the railroad reopened to provide tourist excursions for the 20.4 mile trip from tidewater to the summit of the White Pass and back to Skagway. It also picks up hikers who trek the famed Chilkoot Trail that ends at Lake Bennett and brings them to the Klondike Highway for road transport home.

The railroad along the way paid homage to its heritage by saving old steam engine No. 73, a 1947, 2-8-2 Mikado class steam locomotive, and later restoring her for ceremonial service, so that passengers can venture from the docks in historic downtown Skagway—center of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park—toward the old Gold Rush cemetery, just 1.5 miles away. In those

few miles, tourists can feel the rumble, hear the noise and experience the romance of historic American train travel.

The White Pass embodies Alaska's "boom-and-bust" history, being born as a result of the Klondike Gold Rush. It is the direct result of the spirit and economic boom started in August 1896 when George Washington Carmack and his two Indian companions, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, found gold in a tributary of the Klondike, later named Bonzana Creek outside of Dawson. The railroad experienced the territory's malaise in the early 20th Century, until World War II reinvigorated it. It survived the downturn in North American mining industry and is now benefiting from the growth of the nation's tourism industry and America's renewed interest in its history.

All of America is better off for the railroad's presence. It today is a slice of living history that helps fuel the imagination of Americans and a love for our nation's past. It is a national treasure that we all need to protect and preserve. Happy Golden Anniversary to all the employees of the railroad and may you have a second great century of exciting and historic travel.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:47 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House agrees to the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3642) an act to authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to Charles M. Schulz in recognition of his lasting artistic contributions to the Nation and the world.

The message also announced that the House agrees to the amendment of the Senate to the amendments of the House to the bill (S. 777) an act to require the Department of Agriculture to establish an electronic filing and retrieval system to enable the public to file all required paperwork electronically with the Department and to have access to public information on farm programs, quarterly trade, economic, and production reports, and other similar information.

The message further announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 3030. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 757 Warren Road in Ithaca, New York, as the "Matthew F. McHugh Post Office."

H.R. 3535. An act to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to eliminate the wasteful and unsportsmanlike practice of shark finning.

H.R. 4241. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1818 Milton Avenue in Janesville, Wisconsin, as the "Les Aspin Post Office Building."

H.R. 4542. An act to designate the Washington Opera in Washington, D.C., as the National Opera.